

**Hampton Harbor Bridge Project  
Summary of Meeting  
Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting  
Hampton Town Hall, 100 Winnacunnet Road  
July 12, 2018, 4:30 p.m.**

**Public Advisory Committee**

Frederick Welch, Hampton Town Manager  
Mary-Louise Woolsey, Hampton Selectman  
Chris Jacobs, Hampton Department of Public Works  
Jay Diener, Hampton Conservation Commission, Vice Chair  
Chuck Rage, Hampton Beach Village District, Chairman  
Nancy Stiles, Hampton Beach Area Commission, Chairman  
Betty Moore, Hampton Historical Society  
Kate Bashline, Hampton resident  
Brett Walker, Seabrook Deputy Police Chief  
Richard Maguire, Seabrook Beach Village District  
Mike Pike, Seabrook Harbor Master  
David Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission  
John Nyhan, Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce  
Seth McNally, East Coast Greenway, NH Coast Greenway  
Rep. Michael Edgar, District 21 (Hampton)

**New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)**

Jennifer Reczek, Project Manager  
Bob Landry, Administrator, Bridge Design  
Jill Edelmann, Cultural Resource Program Manager  
David Scott, In-House Design Chief  
Brian Schutt, District Six Engineer

**HDR Consultant Team**

Jim Murphy, Project Engineer  
Jill Barrett, Public Involvement  
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, Environmental and Historic Resources

The first Public Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting for the Hampton Harbor Bridge Project was held on July 12, 2018 in the Selectmen's Meeting Room in Hampton, NH. Jill Barrett, a member of the HDR consultant team, moderated the meeting and introduced New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) representatives and other members of the Project Team. PAC members also introduced themselves to the Project Team. A brief presentation was provided introducing the project and a polling activity was undertaken. In addition, attendees were encouraged to ask questions.

Jill Barrett began by outlining the role of the PAC. She said that key functions include sharing knowledge about local conditions and concerns; communicating with community groups and neighbors about the project; and providing guidance and feedback to the Project Team.

Jennifer Reczek, NHDOT Project Manager, then provided some background on the project. She explained that the bridge is a vital transportation link which accommodates up to 18,000 vehicles per day during peak periods. It was constructed in 1949 and replaced the “Mile-Long” bridge at the crossing. It is one of two remaining bascule bridges in the state, the other being the NH 1B Bridge in New Castle and Rye, NH. Ms. Reczek explained that a bascule bridge uses counterweights to balance the span when it opens. The bridge type is rare in the state because of the limited shoreline and navigable rivers.

Ms. Reczek then explained that the harsh saltwater environment increases the need for maintenance on the bridge. The Hampton Harbor Bridge has been rehabilitated numerous times over the last 50 years, including most recently emergency repairs to the bascule span mechanical system in March 2018. She said the project is necessary because the bridge is now structurally deficient and functionally obsolete; it is on NHDOT’s “red list” of bridges requiring rehabilitation or replacement; and the bridge has long-term operational issues. The project is also necessary in order to improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility.

Jim Murphy with HDR then explained the project process. He said the Project Team has begun evaluating the existing conditions of the bridge. Once this is complete, they will develop a range of alternatives, and then prepare a Type, Size and Location Study (TS&L) which will evaluate each of the alternatives from an engineering perspective. The TS&L will select two action alternatives to be further evaluated to determine their impact on natural and man-made resources. Mr. Murphy shared that the alternatives under consideration include Major Rehabilitation, Replacement with a Fixed Bridge, and Replacement with a Bascule Bridge. Key considerations in the concept development include the right-of-way, vessel traffic, the driving public, pedestrians, bicyclists, historic resources, environmental resources, constructability and construction impacts.

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, a member of the HDR consultant team, explained the necessary environmental compliance for the project. She said agency coordination has already begun, and that this information will be used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project. The EA will evaluate the impact of two action alternatives and a No Action alternative on the natural and man-made environment. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106 consultation is being undertaken to assess the effects of the project on historic properties. Section 4(f) compliance will also be undertaken to determine if the preferred alternative will result in the “use” of a historic property, or public parklands, recreation areas, or wildlife and waterfowl refuges. A Section 6(f) evaluation will be completed if it’s determined the preferred alternative would require the incorporation of a portion of a public park which has received funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Finally, a series of supporting studies may be completed to assess the impacts of the preferred alternative on natural and cultural resources.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll then went on to explain that in 1994 a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed for the replacement of the Alexander Scammell Bridge in Dover, NH. At that time, the Scammell Bridge was one of three bascule bridges in the state, the other two being the Hampton Harbor Bridge and the NH 1B Bridge in New Castle and Rye. In the Scammell MOA, NHDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) committed to the preservation of the two bascule bridges except under exceptional circumstances, including prohibitive cost for rehabilitation, natural disaster, or severe environmental impacts. In 2012, NHDOT began planning for the rehabilitation or replacement of the NH 1B Bridge in New Castle and Rye. Due to concerns expressed during the Section 106 consultation process about the potential loss of the bascule bridge type, compliance for the Hampton Harbor Bridge and the New Castle-Rye Bridge are now being aligned.

At this point, Ms. Barrett conducted a polling exercise with members of PAC to illicit opinions about and priorities for the bridge. The questions and results are documented within the meeting PowerPoint presentation. Following the polling exercise, Ms. Reczek closed the meeting with a brief discussion of the project schedule, including the timing of PAC and Public Information meetings. Ms. Reczek said the schedule as presented was a best case.

Following the presentation, PAC members asked questions and offered information and concerns. They are noted below with responses made by NHDOT or the consultant team.

*Q. How long will the process take? The cost of the rehabilitation or replacement will go up as time passes.*

A. The project is currently scheduled to be advertised in 2022.

*Q. Are bascule bridges still being constructed?*

A. Yes.

*Q. Isn't a bascule bridge more costly?*

A. They generally are, but at this point that has not been assessed. Factors such as land impacts and height of bridge piers will influence the costs of both bascule and fixed options. The required underclearance for vessels under a fixed and bascule structure will heavily influence this. Ultimately, the US Coast Guard will determine the clearance required under the bridge.

*Q. Will you look at dredging as part of this project and consider that with the clearance?*

A. Dredging the harbor is not in our project scope. Another agency, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), would be responsible for dredging.

*Q. Are you looking at the boats kept in the harbor to determine the height that would be needed for a fixed bridge?*

A. We are currently evaluating the height and width of boats using the channel in order to determine if there's a minimum dimensions that would eliminate the need for the majority of the openings.

*Q. Was there a time when regular upkeep and maintenance of the bridge was suspended?*

A. Yes, in the past NHDOT has not invested as much as it should have in maintenance. We are now seeing greater focus on maintenance and preservation.

*Q. How many PAC meetings are planned?*

A. Six meetings.

#### Comments:

- It doesn't make sense to consider replacement with a bascule.
- The USACE couldn't get the dredge equipment under the existing bridge due to the channel width.
- It appears there could be land impacts on the west side of the bridge in the vicinity of the restaurant.
- NHDOT should consider a three or four-lane bridge.
- The project should consider sea level rise.
- The Seabrook Power plant needs to be accessed from the water.

- Taller and wider boats could be built in the future.
- PAC meetings should not be held on Wednesdays in the summer due to the fireworks.
- The Project Team should wait on holding a public meeting until early September, and it shouldn't be held on Election Day.
- Residents living on the south side of the bridge need to be protected. The Project Team should consult with the Hampton Fire Chief to ensure their new equipment is accommodated if the existing bridge is replaced.
- Seabrook and Hampton aren't summer communities. There are real neighborhoods with year-round residents.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 PM.